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Hatch blasts intelligence leaks by his colleagues

By Tom Diaz
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Sen. Orrin Hatch has ripped into some of his colleagues on the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence, calling their comments to the press "alarming."

"I am really disgusted by the comments by some of my colleagues," the Utah Republican said in an interview this week.

"There has been far too much public comment by members of both the Senate and House intelligence committees on sensitive matters," he said.

Mr. Hatch also said the Senate committee has completed an internal investigation into the source of a recent article in The Washington Post alleging that the CIA is involved in a plan to destabilize the government of the Libyan strongman Muammar Qaddafi.

"There is plenty of evidence that this did not come from either of the intelligence committees," he said. "There is more evidence that it came from within the administration ... the Senate committee has concluded that it is highly unlikely, but not impossible, that it came from the Senate staff."

He said the Senate committee staff in a report recommended against using lie detectors to monitor staff compliance with secrecy rules.

"But some of us are beginning to examine that option very closely," Mr. Hatch said.

He said the committee probably will propose in a few weeks a number of wide-ranging steps to tighten up security throughout the government.

Other sources said that investigations into the leak of secret information to the Post on the alleged Libyan operation are being pursued vigorously by both intelligence committees and other government investigators.

Mr. Hatch said there would be "no end to the repercussions" for those found responsible for the leaks.

"Although I can't blame them for printing sensational stories leaked from the intelligence community, the press has some responsibility," he said. "In spite of the inaccuracies in the story, it doesn't take any brains to real-



Sen. Orrin Hatch

ize that some people are going to be killed as a result of that article."

Other sources said a number of committee members share Mr. Hatch's concern about the recent tendency of some of their colleagues to discuss intelligence matters in public.

During the interview, the senator waved a stack of newspaper clippings he said he had asked his staff to gather on the recent defection of Soviet KGB agent Vitaly Yurchenko.

"I find that on every day from Nov. 5 through Nov. 11 there was a reference in at least one of the major newspapers to a senator or a senate source talking about the Yurchenko case," he said. "The exception was Nov. 9, which must have been a travel day."

Mr. Hatch declined to name which of his colleagues he was criticizing. But most of the quotes highlighted by his staff in the news clips were from Sen. David Durenberger, the Minnesota Republican who is chairman of the committee, and Sen. Patrick J. Leahy, the Vermont Democrat who is vice chairman.

"I don't think any of these comments should have been made to the press," Mr. Hatch said. "And I don't think they know what the hell they are talking about ... some of the biggest commenters are doing it for public relations — to re-elect themselves."

"After this public discussion, if you were a KGB agent, would you defect?" he asked. "We'll be lucky now to get a truck driver to defect."

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